COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM (CRP) FY 2007
FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce

Funding Opportunity: Cooperative Research Program, Research and Development Projects in the Gulf of Mexico and off the U.S. South Atlantic Coastal States

Announcement Type: Notice of solicitation for applications

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 11.454 Unallied Management Projects

Dates: We must receive your application by close of business (5 p.m. eastern daylight time) on August 11, 2006. Applications received after that time will not be considered for funding.

Contact Information: Robert Sadler, State/Federal Liaison Branch
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
Scot.Plank@noaa.gov or (727) 824-5324

Funding Opportunity Description: The CRP program provides financial assistance for projects that seek to increase and improve the working relationship between researchers from the NMFS, state fishery agencies, universities, and fishermen. The program is a means of involving commercial and recreational fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information. Collection efforts support the development and evaluation of management and regulatory options.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

CRP is a competitive Federal assistance program that funds projects seeking to increase and improve the working relationship between researchers from NMFS, state fishery agencies, universities, and fishermen. Congress has initiated the cooperative research funding to assist the NMFS to improve the confidence that both commercial and recreational fishermen have in the data and analyses performed in support of fisheries management. The authorizing statute for the Cooperative Research Program is 15 U.S.C. 713c-3(d).

The CRP has as its principal goal to provide a means of involving commercial and recreational fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information to support the development and evaluation of management and regulatory options.

You are encouraged to address one of the priority areas listed below as they pertain to Federally managed species or species relevant to Federal fisheries management plans, but proposals in other areas will be considered. If you select more than one priority, you should list first on your application the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. Projects should focus on the greatest probability of collecting data that aids in recovering, maintaining, or improving the status of stocks upon which fisheries depend; improving the understanding of factors affecting recruitment success and long-term sustainability of fisheries; and/or generating increased values and opportunities for fisheries. Projects are evaluated as to the likelihood of achieving these objectives, with consideration of the magnitude of the eventual economic or social benefits that may be realized.

A. Finfish:

There are several priorities within this general category that pertain to the collection of catch, effort, size frequency, bycatch, and detailed data on fishing area by vessels in the fisheries for finfish species.

1. Characterize the total catch (from all fleets affecting the stocks), including catch composition and disposition of the catch.

   (a) Projects are needed to collect detailed information on the composition and disposition of bycatch and discards.

   (b) Investigations are needed to determine more efficient methods to record catches and associated effort accurately on a real-time basis during fishing operations (*e.g.* electronic logbooks).

   (c) Projects are needed to develop methods to increase the amount of at-sea observations without relying on direct observers. One suggested approach is to use electronic imaging systems.

(d) Projects are needed to utilize fully scientific observers on-board vessels as a means of collecting detailed catch, effort and disposition data. In cases where vessel space does not permit adding an observer, it may be possible to designate the captain or a crew member to record these data. Projects must specify the type of training and equipment that is required to assure that reliable data are collected.

(e) Data collection projects are needed to determine the effects on discard rates of increasing size limits or reducing possession limits. If discard mortality rates are high, changes in size or bag limits may unintentionally lessen conservation benefits. Discard mortality rates currently used in assessments are generally based on small numbers of observations or are unknown. Research is needed to improve estimates of discard mortality rates and must account for the effects of fish size, gear, area, season and depth of fishing.

(f) Data collection projects are needed to improve life history information to improve stock assessments. Improved information about the age-structure of the catch (both retained and discarded), based on otolith or other hard-part aging techniques, will provide insight on a stock's resilience to fishing. Improved information on the reproductive characteristics of the stock will provide information to refine estimates of long-term biological productivity of the stock. Development of new techniques for age and growth and reproductive information are especially important.

(g) Improved age sampling (i.e., representative, randomized collection of structures) is needed for many species. For some species (i.e., protogynous ones) information is needed to characterize landings by sex.

2. Population evaluation.

Needs under this category include abundance measures, and expanded age composition sampling across all fisheries. Other needs include: (1) Research is needed to identify stock boundaries and evaluate stock mixing. Methods could include tagging studies to evaluate movements, otolith microchemistry, and genetics. (2) Data are needed to characterize length, age and, for some species, sex composition of landings and discards in commercial and recreational fisheries. (3) Data are needed to estimate and characterize commercial and recreational discard removals.

3. Monitoring stock abundance through study-fleet applications. This type of cooperative research requires long-term commitment in terms of funding and application.

(a) One objective is to develop a consistent sampling methodology that will permit monitoring of the relative abundance of a fishery resource over time. An initial step for such a project is to develop sampling designs and protocols for sampling

fleet catches to estimate relative abundance, including standardization of fishing power of individual vessels.

(b) Projects are needed to develop methods to determine appropriate sampling designs and pilot studies to estimate recruitment to selected fisheries. An example is the development of a recruitment index for Young-of-the-Year swordfish in the Gulf and along the southeastern U.S. coast - areas that are now closed to longlining.

4. Projects are needed to develop and test gear and fishing strategies designed to reduce or eliminate unintended catch.

5. Fishing Capacity Investigations: There appears to be a wide disparity between the current capacity of regional fishing fleets and the productivity of regional stocks. Cooperative research to optimize the capacity of regional fishing fleets is needed. A number of possibilities ranging from Individual Quota Systems to Vessel Capacity Control programs should be considered. It is likely that regional/fishery differences may require different approaches.

6. Monitor the effects of closed Marine Protected Areas: Research is needed to measure the response of marine resources to creation or expansion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Projects should utilize fishermen's knowledge of critical habitat of harvested species. An example is the large MPA designed to protect small swordfish and other highly migratory species off the US southeastern coast.

(a) Projects are needed to assess the impacts of time/area closures in the Southeast Region that have been designated to protect finfish spawning aggregations and/or concentrations of sub-legal fish.

(b) Projects are needed to collect fine-scale catch-effort data to define the spatial and temporal dimensions of MPAs.

B. Caribbean Fisheries:

1. Habitat and fisheries:

(a) Research and data are needed to estimate the social and economic impacts that are associated with MPA closures. Currently the Caribbean has five seasonal closures in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for spawning aggregations of fish and one no-take zone consisting of an annual closure. The size of these areas is small compared to MPAs established on the mainland, but constitute a significant portion of the fishing grounds in the Caribbean. Although research has been conducted on the biological impacts of several no-take zones, little, if any,

research has been done to estimate the impacts of closures on fishing communities.

(b) Projects are needed also to investigate the biological and socioeconomic effects of alternating either temporal or spatial closures of MPAs.

(c) Cooperative projects between scientists and industry members are needed to enhance studies of the effectiveness of MPAs. Industry members can provide useful information concerning siting of MPAs, especially relating to spawning aggregations and nursery grounds of juvenile fishes. In addition, mark and recapture experiments can employ industry members, especially concerning recovery of tags.

(d) Other needs include population abundance surveys, basic effort and participation, statistics, discard and bycatch estimates.

2. Corals:

(a) Research is needed to determine the impact on coral reefs from commercial fishing operations. Industry participation is needed to determine the impacts of gear on coral reefs.

(b) Research is needed to determine the impacts on coral reefs from recreational fishing activities. Information on recreational fishing activities is sparse and there are approximately 60,000 recreational vessels in the Caribbean. Research should focus on diving, recreational boating and anchoring on coral reefs.

3. Fisheries statistics and assessment

(a) Data are needed to accurately estimate landings by species.

(b) Data are needed to characterize the length and age composition of Caribbean commercial and recreational landings.

(c) Data are needed to estimate and characterize commercial and recreational discard removals.

(d) Data are needed to estimate and characterize commercial and recreational fishing effort.

(e) Research is needed to describe basic life history characteristics of many Caribbean species. Topics include movements and stock identification, age and growth, fecundity and reproduction, identification of spawning areas.

(f) Measures of population abundance are needed.

C. Recreational and Charter Fishery:

1. Socioeconomic research:

   (a) Research is needed to determine the number of recreational fishermen and related trips.

   (b) Data are needed to describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the recreational and charter boat industries.

   (c) In addition to data collection activities, research is needed to determine the economic benefits and costs associated with recreational fishing.

2. Research on Management Alternatives: Investigations should include benefits and costs to the stocks, as well as socioeconomic benefits/costs to participants in the fishery.

   (a) Research is needed to determine the effects of seasonal closures and MPAs on the recreational and charter boat industries.

   (b) Research is needed to determine the effects of seasonal closures and MPAs on spawning stocks and resulting recruitment.

   (c) Research is needed to determine the impacts of bag and size limits on species that are important to recreational and charter boat industries. Projects should emphasize the effects of alternative size limits.

   (d) Research is needed to determine discard mortality rates. This research should include data on length and age composition of discarded fish. At-sea observers on recreational and charter boat trips are one way to perform this type of research and should be considered.

3. Catch/Effort Data: Projects are needed to improve catch and effort data for private recreational fishermen. The projects should identify sample sizes, including number of intercept interviews and dock samples, required to achieve statistical levels of accuracy and precision.

4. Habitat Research:

   (a) Research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of artificial reefs. Projects should examine the value of artificial reefs to fishing communities, and estimate associated economic impacts.

(b) Research is needed to determine the impacts and effects of harmful algal blooms, such as red tide, on recreational and charter boat fisheries.

(c) Investigations are needed to determine essential fishery habitat for certain species such as gag, goliath grouper and sharks. This encompasses more than just a recreational issue, could be moved to a general habitat section.

D. Commercial Shrimp Harvest:

1. Social and economic impact of fluctuations in domestic shrimp values:

   (a) Research is needed on the effects on the domestic shrimp fishery of shrimp imports from foreign countries.

   (b) Research is needed to determine the social and economic impacts of imports on fishermen and fishing communities. Research should include impacts on communities and the industry as a whole.

2. Identifying Non-Trawlable Areas: Research is needed to investigate how habitat enhancements of non-trawlable areas could benefit shrimp fisheries. For example, artificial reefs could be established in non-trawlable areas and the impacts on shrimp and finfish populations could be evaluated. Such research should determine if enhancements would increase habitat for juvenile and adult fish (i.e. red snapper).

3. Quantification of Effort: Research is needed to improve shrimp effort data. Projects need to consider recommendations derived from negotiations with the shrimp industry. Areas of concern are insurance for at-sea observers, acceptable gear and protection of confidential data collected by the project.

4. Bycatch Reduction Device Testing Protocols: There is a need to develop more efficient methods to certify bycatch reduction devices. Protocols should benefit both the resource and the shrimp industry.

5. Quantification of Bycatch Rates: Statistical research is needed to ensure that extrapolation of the results of individual trawl bycatch surveys to the fleet are statistically valid. The procedures should account for the total range of conditions found in all major fishing areas. The research should estimate the number of scientific fishery observers that should be employed to collect bycatch information for prevailing conditions and areas. The project should describe the statistical accuracy and precision of estimates for each major fishing area in addition to the total fishing area. This is critical to improving stock assessments, especially in the Gulf of Mexico.

II. Award Information

This document describes how you can apply for an award under the CRP Grant Program and how we determine which applications we will fund. We are soliciting applications for Federal assistance pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 713c – 3(d). Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a cooperative agreement.

NMFS is substantially involved as a partner in the cooperative research activities with the recipient. Substantial involvement includes planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities through semi_annual reports and frequent contact with the grantee to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award.

Funding Availability: Approximately $2.0 million may be available in fiscal year 2007 for projects. The NMFS Southeast Regional Office anticipates awarding eight projects that will range from $25,000 to $400,000. The average award is $150,000. Publication of this notice obligates neither NMFS to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement nor all or any part of the available funds. Project proposals accepted for funding will need to be completed within 24 months.

III. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include: Institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments and individuals. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible. Foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations are excluded for purposes of this solicitation since the objective of the CRP is to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources.

Applicants who are not commercial or recreational fisherman must have commercial or recreational fishermen participating in their project. There must be a written agreement with a fisherman describing the involvement in the project activity.

Cost Sharing: Cost-sharing is not required for the Cooperative Research Program.

IV. Application and Submission Information

Address to Request Application Package: Application packages are available through grants.gov Apply. You can download the instructions and the application from the grant.gov website. NOAA forms 88-204 Project Summary and 88-205 Project Budget are accessible on the CRP homepage at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/grants/crp.htm and are to be attached as optional documents with the grants.gov submission.

For applicants without internet access, hard copies of applications may be requested from and completed application sent to: National Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

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Content and form of Application Submission: All applicants must include a written agreement with a person employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who will act as a partner in the proposed research project. The NMFS partner will assist the applicant to develop a design for the project to assure that the outcome will provide suitable, scientific data and results to support needed fisheries management information.

Project applications must identify the principal participants, and include copies of any agreements describing the specific tasks to be performed by participants. Project applications should give a clear presentation of the proposed work, the methods for carrying out the project, its relevance to managing and enhancing the use of Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic fishery resources, and cost estimates as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown, by category of expenditures, with appropriate justification for both the Federal and non-Federal shares. The budget must also include estimates of the time and cost for participation of the NMFS partner, separate from the Federal funds being requested.

Applications should exhibit familiarity with related work that is completed or ongoing. Proposals should state whether the research applies to the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic or North Atlantic for highly migratory species or multiple areas. Successful applicants are required to collect and manage data in accordance with standardized procedures and format approved or specified by NMFS and to participate with NMFS in specific cooperative activities that are determined by consultations between NMFS and successful applicants before project grants are awarded. All data collected as part of an awarded grant must be provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service/Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

Applications must be one-sided and unbound. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant. Three copies (one original and two copies) of each application are required and should be submitted to the NMFS Southeast Regional Office, State/Federal Liaison Office (see Addresses).

Submission Dates and Times: We must receive your application by close of business (5 p.m. eastern daylight time) on August 11, 2006. Applications submitted through www.grants.gov will be accompanied by a date and time receipt indication on them. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copy proposals will be accepted and date recorded when they are received in the program office. Electronic or hard copies received after the deadline will not be considered and hard copy applications will be returned to the sender.

Intergovernmental Review: Applications under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

Funding Restrictions: If the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a Federal agency, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate. The Federal share of indirect costs proposed must not exceed 25 percent of the total direct costs identified on NOAA Form 88-205 Project Budget.

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

Other Submission Requirements: Applications should be submitted through www.grants.gov. If an applicant does not have internet access, hard copies should be sent to:

National Marine Fisheries Service
State/Federal Liaison Branch
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

V. Application Review Information

When we receive applications, we will screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Dates); include SF 424 signed and dated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant, either a commercial or recreational fisherman or contains a written agreement with a commercial or recreational fisherman; includes a written agreement with a NMFS partner; address one of the funding priorities for federally managed species; and include a budget, statement of work, and milestones, and identify the principal investigator. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

Evaluation Criteria: Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three or more appropriate private and/or public sector experts to determine their technical merit. These reviewers will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers provide comments and assign scores to the applications based on the following criteria, with the weights shown in parentheses:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (40%): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes: Does the proposal assist industry? Does the proposal address issues that are important to regional fishery management?

2. Technical/scientific merit (40%): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this includes: Does the proposal have a clearly stated goal(s) with associated objectives that meet the needs outlined in the project narrative? Does the proposal clearly identify and describe, in the project outline and statement of work, scientific methodologies and analytical procedures that will adequately address project goals and objectives? Do the principal investigators provide a realistic timetable to enable full accomplishment of all aspects of the research?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (0%): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This program does not use this criterion.

4. Project costs (20%): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, this includes: How effective are the proposed methods in enabling the principal investigators to maintain stewardship of the project performance, finances, cooperative relationships, and reporting requirements? Does the budget appropriately allocate and justify costs?

5. Outreach and education (0%): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This program does not use this criterion.

Review and Selection Process: Following the technical review, we will determine the weighted score for each individual review and average the individual technical review score to determine the final technical score for each application. Then, we will rank applications in descending order by their final technical scores. The top twelve applications will be forwarded to a panel for further review. Those applications that are not in the top twelve category will be eliminated from further consideration.

CRP Panel: Those applications that meet the top twelve ranking will be presented to a panel of non-NOAA fishery experts known as the CRP panel. Each member of the CRP Panel individually considers: if needs of the Agency are addressed in each proposal; if the project assists industry; and if the project addresses issues that are important to regional fisheries management. Needs of the Agency follow the information identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Title III, Sections 301 and 404. The individuals on the Panel provide comments and rate each of these proposals as either "Recommended for Funding" or "Not Recommended for Funding." No consensus advice will be given by the Panel. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of preferred funding based on the number of Panel members recommending the proposal for funding.

Science Center Director: The ranked proposals are provided to the Science Center Director, who is the selecting official, in the order of preferred funding, based on the number of Panel members recommending the proposal for funding. If there are ties in the rankings, those ties will be distinguished by the peer review score. The Science Center Director also receives the Panel members' individual comments. The Science Center Director, in consultation with the Assistant Administrator, selects proposals after considering the technical reviews and the selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

Selection Factors: The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on below factors. The Science Center Director will justify in writing any such selection.

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
    a. Geographically
    b. By type of institutions

c. By type of partners
d. By research areas
e. By project types

3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/ federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

Award notices: Successful applications generally are recommended within 215 days from the date of publication of this notice. The earliest start date of awards average 90 days after each project is selected and after all NMFS/applicant negotiations of cooperative activities have been completed. The earliest start date of awards is about 300 days after the date of publication of this notice. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications. Unsuccessful applications will be returned to the applicant.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NMFS cooperative involvement with the activities of each project are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NMFS Program Office. Projects must not be initiated by recipients until a signed award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements: This notice contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms is identified in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). The public reporting burden for the collections of information is estimated to average one hour for an application, one hour for a semi-annual report, and one hour for a final report. These estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding these burden estimates or any other aspect of these collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Ellie Francisco Roche (see Contact).

Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) is applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, for applicant projects or proposals, which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: (http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/), including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, (http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, (http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm).

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under the description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Reporting: If you are selected to receive a grant award for a project you must:

- Submit semiannual project status reports on the use of funds and progress of the project to us within 30 days after the end of each six-month period. You will submit these reports to the individual identified as the NMFS Program Officer in the funding agreement.

- Submit a final report within 90 days after completion of each project to the NMFS Program Officer. The final report must describe the project and include an evaluation of the work you performed and the results and benefits in sufficient detail to enable us to assess the success of the completed project.

- Submit all data collected as part of the project to the NMFS partner. Project data must be edited and verified as accurate by the applicant prior to being submitted to the NMFS.

- In addition to the final report, we request that you submit any publications printed with grant funds (such as manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Program Office for dissemination to the public.

We are committed to using available technology to achieve the timely and wide distribution of final reports to those who would benefit from this information. Therefore, you are encouraged to submit final reports in electronic format, in accordance with the award terms and conditions for publication on the MARFIN Home Page. You may charge the costs associated with preparing and transmitting your final reports in electronic format to the grant award. Reports may also be submitted in hard copy.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Robert Sadler, State/Federal Liaison Office, (727) 824-5324, or Robert.Sadler@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

We will award cooperative agreements for a maximum period of up to 24 months. The award period depends upon the duration of funding requested in the applications, the decision of the NMFS selecting official on the amount of funding, the results of post-selection negotiations between the applicant and NOAA officials, and pre-award review of the application by NOAA and DOC officials.

You must also be available to respond to questions during the review and evaluation of the proposal(s).

We are strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities in its educational and research programs. Department of Commerce (DOC)/NOAA's goals are to achieve full participation by Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) in order to advance the development of human potential, to strengthen the nation's capacity to provide high-quality education, and to increase opportunities for MSIs to participate in and benefit from Federal financial assistance programs. DOC/NOAA encourages all applicants to include meaningful participation of MSIs.

If you are selected to receive a grant award for a project, you must:

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the project, be responsible for the performance of all activities for which funds are granted, and be responsible for the satisfaction of all administrative and managerial conditions imposed by the award.

- Keep records sufficient to document any costs incurred under the award, and allow access to these records for audit and examination by the Secretary of Commerce, the Comptroller General of the United States, or their authorized representatives; and submit financial status reports (SF 269) to NOAA Grants in accordance with the award conditions.